

May 16, 2021 Seventh Sunday of Easter
Service of Word and Prayer

We are using parts of the Service of the Word liturgy this morning, from your green hymn book, the Lutheran Book of Worship, page 126. The prayers are based on Sundays & Seasons. Shut off all the distractions in your home. Perhaps print out copies of this for all. Enjoy the quiet for a bit – take in some deep breaths. Light your candle. May your family be blessed in this time together.

The Gathering

Greeting: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Call to Worship: Creator of earth and sky, of endless space and burning stars, we come together in the belief that we are important to you. You created us; you sustain our lives; you fulfil us with hope. We give thanks for the miracle of spring and for the power of new life within us and our world; through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Hymn: ELW 843 - Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Lord be with you ~ and also with you.

Prayer of the day: Gracious and glorious God, you have chosen us as your own. By the powerful name of Christ, you protect us from evil. By your spirit transform us and your beloved world, that we may find joy through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Word

The First Reading is from **Acts 1: 15-17, 21-26**

Psalm 1, is found on page 215

The Second Reading is from **1 John 5: 9-13**

Please rise for the gospel lesson. ***Holy, Holy, Holy, our hearts adore you. Our hearts are glad to say the words: you are Holy God.***

Gospel: John 17: 6-19

SERMON

This reading is from the evening before Jesus crucifixion. In this prayer, Jesus reveals his deepest love and deepest yearning as he faces death. He doesn't pray for himself. He doesn't pray for courage or an easy death. He stops everything and prays for those he loves. This prayer is part of our spiritual foundation. If we are one with God, everything else will follow. If we are one with God, nothing can shake us.

Jesus prays "that (we) may all be one" (v. 21). Now we are getting to the difficult part! He keeps telling us to love one another. That sounds like a Hallmark sentimentality but is, in fact, a real challenge. It is difficult to love one another up close. It is easy enough to love the

whole world, because they're out there somewhere--but it's tough to love our neighbor.

Prayer is love. Taking the time to name the hopes, joys, concerns, fears, and thanksgiving of someone you know and bring all of that into the presence of God through prayer is an act of love, plain and simple. It expresses your care, your concern and your compassion for the one(s) for whom you are praying. Prayer is a time to tell the truth.

We cannot love each other by our own affections, or forgive each other by our own grace. We cannot be one with each other by our own strength. We must establish the vertical relationship with God before we have any hope of establishing the horizontal relationship with each other.

Jesus' prayer tells us that our oneness is the key to our effectiveness as a church. Let me say that one more time. *Our oneness is the key to our effectiveness as a church.* The purpose of our oneness with each other is that we might make an effective witness to the world. We Christians have so often failed in this matter, and that's so tragic.

Three times Jesus mentions the love with which God loved him. The father continues to love Jesus and the Father and the Son together love us into unity with the Holy Spirit and each other. Jesus described this unity as a mystery. It is something well beyond our understanding and initiative. Being loved into unity is the gracious activity of God.

Canada today is indeed one very large village. From coast to coast to coast, Canadians have opened their hearts in a time of pandemic crisis and we are all united in place. What affects one affects the whole.

After a community crisis we are becoming accustomed to seeing people gather at times outside for a candlelight vigil. People are asked to carry

their lighted candles home, carrying sparks of light throughout the community. One reporter is quoted to say this:

"I felt silly carrying a candle three blocks home, cupping my hand to protect the flame. This, after all, is the sort of gesture a detached journalist employs as a folksy detail in an article, but secretly considers to be irredeemably corny or maybe just too intimate.

I felt that way until I saw a candle burning on someone's porch and two more in the car that drove past, as I climbed the front stairs to my house, with warm wax all over my fingers."

Those candles made a difference. The image of those candles will stay with people for a long time--the candle on the porch--the candles in the car--candles being carried down the street--the warm wax. Those candles have power. They have power to change minds. They have power to change lives. They have power to change a community.

Those candles would not have power if only two or three people had carried them home. No individual candle has power. *It's only as the community comes together for hope that the candles have power.* It's only as many people light many candles and carry them into their many neighborhoods that the candles have power. The memory of the many candles on that spot has power. The sightings of candles in unexpected places--a porch--a car--has power.

And so it is with the church. Christ called us to be his people, even though we are a diverse people. We begin to have power when we make Christ our Lord. We begin to have power when God sends his spirit to dwell within us. But our really powerful witness begins when we come together as the people of God to bear witness to the risen Christ. Our really powerful witness begins when we are one both with Christ and with each other. **Amen**

Hymn: LBW 526 / ELW 834 - Immortal Invisible God Only Wise

Our Response

OFFERING PRAYER Gracious God, receive our gifts as you receive us. You walk beside us and you meet us in hunger with bread from heaven. Nourish us anew in your tender care, and empower us in faithful service to tend to others with this same love, through Jesus Christ our saving grace. **Amen.**

Prayers of the People by Joy Statham

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

A brief silence.

Holy God, in Christ Jesus the joy of the church is made complete. Root the church in your Word and unify us as Christ's body. Send us into the world as your loving people, ready to testify to your Spirit at work. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Mighty God, the world is your handiwork, displaying your creative impulse. Seas teem with life, forests reach up to praise you, and the mystery of life lies deep in the soil. Guard and keep this world for the well-being of all your creatures. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Gracious Sovereign, those who follow your ways are like trees planted near streams of water. Establish the leaders of nations and all in authority in your grace and truth. Strengthen them, so that the people they serve will have abundant life. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Generous Savior, you befriend those who are sick, suffering, poor, lonely, outcast, rejected, or sick. Grant healing and love to all in need (*especially*). Give them tangible signs of your steadfast love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Creator God, here in this community we share the gift of praying, learning, and supporting one another. Give us thankful hearts as we claim the gifts that are unique to us. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Saving God, your wonderful promise is the gift of eternal life in Jesus. Through the witness of those who have died in you, strengthen us now in this gift of life. We cherish the memory of your saints. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The peace of Christ be with you always and also with you.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray **The Lord's Prayer:**

Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those
 who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
 and the power, and the glory,
 forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: ELW 582 / LBW 523 - Holy Spirit Ever Dwelling

Benediction

God the creator strengthen you; Jesus the beloved fill you; and the Holy Spirit the comforter keep you in peace. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. and share the good news. **Thanks be to God.**